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# HOPE AS A PRIMITIVE MENTAL STATE

*Gabriel Segal*

*Mark Textor*

## *Abstract*

We criticize attempts to define hope in terms of other psychological states and argue that hope is a primitive mental state whose nature can be illuminated by specifying key aspects of its functional profile.<sup>1</sup>

## **1. Introduction**

Hope matters. Without hope, we would not do many of the things we do. What is hope? Philosophers have tried to answer this question by providing analyses of the concept of hope in the form of necessary and sufficient conditions. Every philosopher working on hope that we know of takes it to be a combination of a desire, a belief and, possibly, a third factor. In this paper, we discuss representative examples of such definitions and find them wanting. No plausible definition of hope comes from these analyses. We take this to be unsurprising. Philosophers of mind have, by and large, abandoned the project of giving reductive definitions of mental states. Typically, what is distinctive of mental states is their functional profile: their place in a network of mental states. Similarly, hope can neither be defined in terms of belief and desire nor any other mental state: it is a primitive mental state. However, while hope is primitive, its nature can be illuminated by describing some of its links with belief, desire, intention and action.

## **2. The Belief/Desire Theory of Hope and its Shortcomings**

The ‘lowest common denominator analysis’ takes hope to be analyzable as a combination of belief and desire.<sup>2</sup> One cannot hope that  $p$  if one is certain that  $p$  or certain that not  $p$ . (See Pettit, ‘Hope and Its Place’, p. 154.) Hence, if someone,  $T$ , hopes that  $p$ ,  $T$  neither rules out  $p$ , nor not  $p$ .<sup>3</sup> In order to hope that  $p$ ,  $T$  also needs to desire  $p$ :

- (Hope1)  $T$  hopes that  $p$  iff:  
 (1)  $T$  neither rules out  $p$  nor not- $p$  &  
 (2)  $T$  desires that  $p$ .<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks to an anonymous referee for very helpful comments and to Jessica Leech and Jimmy Lenman for discussion.

<sup>2</sup> This is Pettit’s term. See Philip Pettit, ‘Hope and its Place in the Mind’, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 592: *Hope, Power and Governance*, 2004, pp. 152-65, p. 152

<sup>3</sup> This neutral characterization of  $T$ ’s doxastic state can be refined by appealing to partial belief, assignment of probabilities (see John P. Day, *Hope: A Philosophical Inquiry*, *Acta Philosophica Fennica* Vol. 51. Helsinki: Philosophical Society of Finland, 1991) or epistemic uncertainty (see Adrienne Martin, ‘Hope and Dreams’, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 83 (2011), pp. 148-73, p. 150). For our purposes it is not important to choose the right refinement.

<sup>4</sup> See Nicholas Smith, ‘Analysing Hope’, *Critical Horizons* 9, (2008), pp. 5-23, p. 8 ff. (Hope1) is defended in Jayne M. Waterworth, *An Analysis of Hope*, (Houndsmill: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2003). Martin ‘Hope and Dreams’, p. 150 takes it to be the default definition. Ariel Meirav, ‘The Nature of Hope’, *Ratio* 22, (2009), pp. 216-33, 218ff and

Proponents of tripartite analyses of hope deny that (1) and (2) are sufficient and add a third condition. In this paper, we consider representative examples of tripartite analyses of hope and find them wanting. We begin by outlining the motivation for a third condition.

Why should one take (Hope1) to be insufficient? Hope is pre-theoretically conceived as a state with motivational force: ‘Courage is like love, it must have hope to nourish it’ (Napoleon).<sup>5</sup> Consider the example of Reinhold, the mountaineer. Reinhold wants to climb to the summit. However, he knows that the chances of success are slim, while the chances that he will fail and even get injured in the attempt are high. Grice argued that intending to do *A* by an activity  $\phi$  requires the belief that one will *A* by  $\phi$ -ing.<sup>6</sup> This seems too strong. *Prima facie*, I can intend to go to the cinema tomorrow in full awareness that things may happen that prevent me from doing so.<sup>7</sup> This suggests that if one intends to do *A* by  $\phi$ -ing one must at least believe that it is likely that one will *A* by  $\phi$ -ing or that, *ceteris paribus*, one will achieve *A* by  $\phi$ -ing. But even this weakened condition is too strong as Reinhold's case shows. For he lacks a belief to this effect. However, if one intends to do *A* by  $\phi$ -ing one must believe that it is likely that one will *A* by  $\phi$ -ing or that, *ceteris paribus*, one will achieve *A* by  $\phi$ -ing. Reinhold lacks a belief to this effect. Reinhold, though, takes it to be highly unlikely that he will succeed in reaching the summit by climbing. Yet, when he proceeds to the summit in full view of the uncertainty of his endeavor, he can still intend to reach the summit by climbing. How can Reinhold form an intention to climb when he knows that his chances of success are slim and the costs may be high? There is an idiomatic phrase that people sometimes use to help explain their actions: ‘more in hope than expectation’. Reinhold climbs in the hope of reaching the summit, even though he does not expect to succeed.

It is possible that Reinhold thinks the potential reward is high enough to warrant the attempt, just on the basis of a cost-benefit calculation. But an appeal to such a calculation is not required for the explanation. He might be quite unsure about what his chances are. And, indeed, a cost-benefit analysis might not warrant the action, given the slim chance of success and the high risk involved.

Hope stands in for belief when one believes that the chances of success in one's endeavor are slim. This is what makes hope valuable for us. It allows us to act in situations where we do not believe our action will succeed or even believe that there is a very good chance that they might fail. If hope were just a belief/desire pair it would be difficult to see how it could play that role for us.

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Adrienne Martin, *How We Hope: A Moral Psychology*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), p. 11-14 give overviews over the literature on the standard definition.

<sup>5</sup> See also Victoria McGeer, ‘The Art of Hope’, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 592: *Hope, Power and Governance*, 2004, pp. 100-27 p.108. Martin (‘Hope and Dreams’, p 148 and p. 150) takes the ‘commonplace’ that hope has motivational force to be widespread misconception. We discuss her criticism in the next section.

<sup>6</sup> See Paul H. Grice, ‘Intention and Uncertainty’, *Proceedings of the British Academy* 57, (1971), pp. 263–79, p. 264-6.

<sup>7</sup> See Gilbert Harman, ‘Willing and Intending’, in Grandy, R. E.; Warner, R. (eds) *Philosophical Grounds of Rationality: Intention, Categories and Ends*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 363-380, p. 365. Harman (ibid, p. 366) in fact considers the response we favour – sometime we act in hope and not in expectation – but does not pursue it because he does not share the intuition that people like Reinhold act with the intention to reach a goal.

Here is a second example to make the same point. Reinhold and Hillary are climbing a difficult route. They are still some distance from the summit and are assessing their chances. Both believe that they have a fifty percent chance of success and a fifty percent chance of failure. Their desires to reach the summit are equally strong, as are their desires to return home safely. As far as Reinhold's and Hillary's belief/desire psychology goes, the choice between returning to base camp and ascending to the summit hangs in the balance. Will they be paralyzed, like Buridan's ass, or only able to break the deadlock by tossing a coin? No, Reinhold hopes that he will make it to the summit, hence he is likely to go; Hillary has lost heart, hence, he is likely to return. Hope can break the deadlock.

To sum up: the examples suggest that the motivational force of hope is not the motivational force of a desire/belief pair. Hence (Hope1) does not capture the distinctive motivational force of hope.<sup>8</sup> Either one needs to improve (Hope1) or to argue that, in spite of appearances, hope lacks a distinctive motivational force.

Martin ('Hope and Dreams', p. 150ff) takes the second option: she argues that hope has no distinctive motivational force, but that a distinct motivational force is provided by certain *expressions* of hope. For instance, hope is expressed in the mental activity of fantasizing. One fantasizes, roughly speaking, if one spins out a narrative in which one's desires are satisfied. (ibid., p. 159ff.) Fantasizing about what one hopes for affects motivation in a way that 'outstrips' the effects of desire (ibid., p. 171.). This thought motivates Martin's analysis of hope in terms of a readiness to justify hopeful activities in terms of the probability of the hoped-for outcome. (Martin, *How we Hope*, p. 69.) For example, one can be ready to justify fantasizing that p, although one is not motivated to bring about that p. We will come back to Martin's analysis in section 6. In the next section, we will argue contra Martin that hope has motivational force and there is therefore no reason to look for an analysis of hope that accords it no motivational force.

### 3. Is Hope Motivationally Inert?

Martin ('Hope and Dreams', p. 152ff) adduces three considerations that suggest that hope is motivationally inert.

*Limited Agency:* We can hope for an outcome that we cannot influence. For instance, I can hope that the asteroid will not collide with Earth, although *I know that I can't do anything to prevent the collision*. Hope, says McGeer ('Art of Hope', p. 103), can arise 'where our own agency is irrelevant to the occurrence of the hoped-for end'. In such cases, one's hope that p cannot motivate one to bring p about. Hence hope cannot, in general, have motivational force.<sup>9</sup>

*Hope without Agential Force:* *Prima facie*, one can hope for an outcome or state of affairs without taking steps to bring it about or intending to take such steps.

<sup>8</sup> See Martin 'Hope and Dreams', p. 150 and Luc Bovens, 'The Value of Hope', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 59 (1999), pp. 667-81, p. 674 for different arguments for the same conclusion.

<sup>9</sup> Meirav ('The Nature of Hope', p. 230) argues that if one can hope for outcomes that we cannot influence, there must be another factor that determines or contributes to determining the hoped-for outcome. He proposes, in turn, that one hopes that p if, and only if, one desires the outcome, assigns it a probability, and evaluates the determining factor positively; otherwise one despairs. Meirav gets at an interesting feature of what it is *to pin one's hope on something*. But pinning one's hope on something, say a judge that decides one's case, is not hoping for it. For there are cases where one can act in order to bring about the hoped-for outcome.

Adams provides a telling illustration:

We all hope for world peace, but not that many of us are trying to bring it about. Hope may be in the hearts of those who are trying to bring it about, but, if I'm right, it takes more than a hope to initiate, guide, and sustain an attempt; it takes an intention.<sup>10</sup>

*Transcendent Hope*: one may hope for an 'object or outcome that transcends the hopeful person's conceptual resources'. For example, one may hope for resurrection, yet, have no conception of what resurrection is. But how can one strive to bring about an outcome if one has no conception of it? Martin ('Hope and Dreams', p. 153) acknowledges that transcendent hope is a rather esoteric case and her case against the thesis does not rest on it.

We will focus on the first two counter-examples, and leave it to the reader to consider how we could best respond to the third, in the light of our general account of hope. We will take the cases in order.

Concerning *Limited Agency*: we think that Gravlee's distinction between *hopeful* and *confident* deliberation provides the right response to this observation.<sup>11</sup>

In *confident deliberation* one takes it to be within one's power to bring about the hoped-for state of affair. One deliberates about how to bring about the fulfillment of one's hope.

In *hopeful deliberation* one believes that one cannot bring about the hoped-for states of affairs. One deliberates about what to do in the case that one's hope is fulfilled.

In both cases, hope has motivational force. To see this, consider an example of hopeful deliberation. If you hope that the asteroid will not destroy Earth today, you will not deliberate over how to prevent the meteor from hitting Earth. But you can deliberate about *what to do if the asteroid does not hit Earth*. If hopeful deliberation reaches a conclusion, one will be motivated to act out of hope. For example, if your hopeful deliberation reaches the conclusion that you should buy tickets for the train today to go to the seaside tomorrow, you will be motivated to, and, *ceteris paribus*, actually buy tickets.

In confident and hopeful deliberation we deliberate about different things: about how to bring about the hoped-for state of affairs (confident deliberation) and about how to act if the hoped-for state of affairs comes about (hopeful deliberation). But despite this difference, there is commonality: hope motivates one to act. There is no reason to credit only the expressions of hope with the generation of motivational force if one acknowledges that the motivational force of hope may be manifested in these different ways.

Martin offers the further example of past-directed hopes. Consider my hope that a certain road was built properly. (We have changed the example). Again, my hope will, *ceteris paribus*, motivate me to act. For example, I will take the road, if I have a choice between it and another road, although I cannot change how the road was built.

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<sup>10</sup> Fred Adams, 'Trying with the Hope', in J. Greco, A. Mele, M. Timmons (eds.) *Rationality and the Good. Critical Essays on the Ethics and Epistemology of Robert Audi*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 143-162, p. 158.

<sup>11</sup> Scott G. Gravelee, 'Aristotle on Hope', *The Journal for the History of Philosophy* 38, (2000), pp. 461-77, p. 473.

*Concerning Hope without Agential Force:* hope has agential force in the sense that a desire has agential force: it tends to cause action. However, any force may be blocked in relation to any specific effect: it may be outcompeted and prevented from manifesting itself by other forces. Alternatively, the right conditions for its manifestation may be absent. Desire is an obvious example. One might very much desire to visit Australia, yet make no attempt to do so. But of course desire is a motivational state. It will issue in activity if, but only if, other appropriate attitudes are in place. This applies to hope too and provides the key to undermining the proposed counter-examples of motivationally inert hope.

Martin herself undermines her own counter-example of a person who hopes that a bill will fail without taking steps to bring about this result by saying ‘perhaps [my lack of planning etc] indicates that my hope is not particularly strong (or more likely, that I feel relatively confident that these bills will fail).’ (Martin, ‘Hope and Dreams, p. 153.) Martin’s example does not show that hope is motivationally inert, but it suggests that the manifestation of this power depends on other attitudes. If one hopes that *p* and thinks one has a chance of bringing about *p*, one will take steps to try to bring *p* about, provided various conditions are met: for example, provided that one does not believe that *p* is likely to happen anyway.

The motivational force of hope is only manifested if (a) it is not blocked by other forces and (b) the conditions for its manifestation are met.

*First* (a): one may hope for world peace, but not take steps to bring it about because one also desires a new house and that desire prevents one from doing anything for world peace. The hope may be relatively weak and ineffectual. But a weak motivational force is still a motivational force.

*Secondly* (b): like any force, hope may only manifest when certain conditions are met. A battery may be charged, yet its energy cannot be released to start an engine because there is no transmitter. Similarly, a mental state may have agential force, yet the conditions for its manifestation not obtain. Consider an independent example. My anger has agential force, but the agential force will remain inert if there is no appropriate course of action that would allow me to act on it. I may be genuinely angry about the injustice of the political system, but be powerless to change anything. The force is there, but it is inert. My anger is pent-up.

In Adams’s example, the motivational force of hope for world peace may be ineffectual due to lack of a plan for how to act on it effectively. Contrast this to a long-range shot in football. Players often make long range shots hoping, but not believing, that they will score a goal. This hope will in many cases be strong enough to prompt an attempt. One reason for this is that it is clear what one needs to do to attempt to effect the hoped-for result: put boot to ball and let fly. But most of us wouldn’t know how to prevent an asteroid from hitting Earth. The hope that the asteroid will not hit has agential force, but it remains inert as there is no effectual course of action to bring about the hoped-for outcome.

To sum up: the view that hope has distinctive motivational force has not been refuted. There are principled responses to the proposed counterexamples. If the motivational force of hope is not that of a belief/desire pair, hope cannot be just a complex of belief and desire: one needs to add a further element to the definition. In sections 4 to 6 we will look at attempts to provide the third element. To anticipate: these attempts fail. Our conclusion is that hope is not a complex mental state. Like belief and desire, it is a primitive mental state that has a distinctive functional role all of its own.

#### 4. Hope = Belief + Desire + Dedication of Mental Energy

Hope, then, is not just a combination of belief and desire. Tripartite analyses of hope argue that hope is a combination of belief, desire and something else.

Bovens takes the *activity* of 'mental imaging' to be the further constitutive element of hope. He tells us:

Hoping is just having the proper belief and desire in conjunction with being engaged to some degree in mental imaging. (Bovens, 'The Value of Hope', 674.)

In short:

- (Hope2) *T* hopes that *p* iff
- (1) *T* neither rules out *p* nor not-*p* &
- (2) *T* desires that *p*.
- (3) *T* is engaged in the activity to mental imaging that *p*.

He further characterizes mental imaging as 'devoting mental energy to the question what would be the case if a projected state of affairs obtains' (ibid). If one devotes mental energy to the question what would be if *p*, we can further assume, one directs one's attention to *p* and how it can be brought about.<sup>12</sup>

Is (3) an independent further condition that adds to (1) and (2)? Just like believing that *p*, desiring that *p* is a dispositional state that typically has a variety of mental, emotional and behavioral manifestations. For example, to believe that the ice is dangerously thin tends to dispose one 'to be unhesitant in telling oneself and others that it is thin, in acquiescing in other people's assertions to that effect, in objecting to statements to the contrary, in drawing consequences from the original proposition, and so forth.'<sup>13</sup> And if one desires that *p*, one's attention will, *ceteris paribus*, be directed to reasons for *p*, information about *p* etc.<sup>14</sup> *S*'s desire that *p* is manifest in his attention being directed on considerations pertaining to *p* and its consequences, when the occasion arises. Hence, Bovens has not added an *independent* third condition to the belief/desire analysis of hope. The reason that hoping that *p* differs in motivational force from the corresponding belief/desire pair therefore also counts against his proposal.<sup>15</sup>

In fact, Bovens's analysis creates a new problem. His third condition requires that one must actually direct one's attention to the hoped-for outcome. This is as implausible as to say that one must actually assert or judge that *p* in order to believe that *p*. Hope is a dispositional mental state like belief and desire. Just as one doesn't stop believing that *p* when one is asleep, one doesn't stop hoping for things either. Hoping that *p* is not a particular mental activity, but a mental state that may persist over time and that disposes one to a variety of cognitive, emotional and behavioral responses.

Bovens acknowledges that one can hope that *p* while one is not engaged in

<sup>12</sup> Martin, ('Hope and Dreams', p. 159) rejects mental imaging as a necessary condition for hoping, but takes fantasizing to be an *expression* of hope. Fantasizing is more demanding than devoting mental energy to a question (see section 2).

<sup>13</sup> Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, (London: Hutchinson, 1949), p. 134-5.

<sup>14</sup> See Thomas Scanlon, *What We Owe To Each Other*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 39 and Timothy Schroeder, 'Desire', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* 2009 sect. 1.4.

<sup>15</sup> See Martin, *How We Hope*, p. 19.

mental imaging. But, says, Bovens,

I must have at least some intermittent episodes of mental imaging before I can be said to be hoping at all. (Bovens, 'The Value of Hope', p. 675.)

Again, this response seems implausible. Often a belief is the result of a judgment, but not always. Norma Jean believes that her name is *Norma Jean*, but she has no occasion to make the corresponding judgement. Likewise for hope. Hope is a dispositional state that can be manifest in many ways. Mental imaging is among the manifestations of hope, but it is only one among others. One can hope that p without having actually mentally imaged that p: hope can manifest itself in other ways.

This point can be brought out by an example.<sup>16</sup> Imagine that you are a racing driver leading the Grand Prix of Monaco with only 10 laps to go. The hope that you will win starts to grow, but if you were to dedicate attention to the question of what would happen if you were to win, your chances of victory would be dramatically reduced. Managing *not* to focus your attention on this and similar questions during the race is not losing hope that you will win. Quite the opposite seems to be the case. The fact that you suppress the inclination to devote mental energy to anything other than driving is a sign that you genuinely hope to win. If you were just entertaining the possibility of winning the race without any hope of so doing, you might indulge in mental imaging. Your hope manifests itself in the purposeful and confident way you maneuver the car round the circuit, rather than any episode of imaging.

Nor does mental imaging suffice for hoping. Consider a second racing driver who wants to win and figures he has slight chance of victory. While driving, he starts to mentally image that he will win. It is perfectly possible that his mentally imaging is in this case just a distracting wish-fulfillment fantasy and does not by itself make him any more optimistic than he was before. The occurrence of episodes of mentally imagining does not make him someone who hopes he will win the race. One might try to finesse that point and require that these episodes are caused by one's beliefs and desires. However, this move does not solve the problem. He might be prone to obsess about victory, once he thinks there is a chance. But his obsessive mental imaging might fail to give him any more hope and certainly fails to constitute hoping.

Bovens might respond by saying that the example only brings out the need to be disposed to mentally image what one hopes for. For the driver needs to *control* his mental imaging in the example. So hope seems to dispose one to engage in mental imaging. But if only the disposition is required, then we are back at the belief/desire analysis. One's desire that p disposes one to devote one's attention to questions concerning the hoped-for outcome.

### **5. Hope = Belief + Desire + Cognitive Resolve**

Pettit proposes a tripartite analysis of hope that does not take the third factor to be an ongoing mental activity. He motivates his proposal by first considering precaution. If you plan for p and have good reasons to think that p will come about, yet the prospect of not p would be devastating, it is prudent to adopt the maxim of acting as if p will not come about. (See Pettit 'Hope and its Place', p. 157) Substantial hope is the opposite of precaution. Someone who has formed a substantial hope, says Pettit, has *resolved* to act as if p because s/he has a low degree of belief that p will be the case. (ibid., p. 159.) Pettit himself does not articulate his 'substantial view' of hope in the

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<sup>16</sup> Thanks to Jimmy Lenman for bringing such examples to mind.



standard format of necessary and sufficient conditions, but the following seems to be fair rendering of his Cognitive Resolve view:

- (Hope3) *T* has the *substantial* hope that *p* iff
- (1) *T* neither rules out *p* nor rules out not-*p* &
  - (2) *T* desires that *p* &
  - (3) *T* has resolved to act as if *p* will be the case (or is highly probable) because *T* wants to act in the face of his low degree of conviction. (ibid., p. 157)

According to (Hope3), forming substantial hope that *p* is like adopting a plan for action. Resolving to act-as-if is best understood as the adoption of a strategy or policy that allows some beliefs, but not others to influence action. The strategy is chosen in response to one's low confidence about whether *p* will be the case:

The signal danger of this loss of heart prompts the agent to adopt a strategy that consists in acting as if the desired prospect is going to obtain or has a good chance of obtaining. (ibid., p. 157)

The resolution will initiate a substantial hope only if it is made in response to the right kind of prompt.<sup>17</sup> If the resolution is made because of other 'prompters', one is not hoping. For example, if you resolve to act as if *p* has a good chance of obtaining because I *tell* you so, then you are not hoping that *p*; you trust, or simply accept that *p*.

While Pettit's substantial hope seems to be an important mental phenomenon, it is not what the folk call 'hope'. One can hope that *p* although one has not resolved to act as if *p* will be the case or adopted any strategy. More often than not, hope just 'grows' in one or one simply finds oneself hoping for an outcome, but one has not made any resolution or decision. Note also that hope is not an attitude that one *can* choose to have or not. I might offer you a million pounds to hope that the asteroid will not hit the earth, but any hope may still evade you. But you could nevertheless adopt a policy of acting as if the asteroid will not hit.

Pettit could respond by arguing that he is only concerned with substantial hope, the hope that guards against loss of heart. However, even if one focuses on those cases, Pettit's account of hope is incomplete because resolving to act as if *p* will come to be is insufficient to prevent loss of heart. One needs to *persist with one's resolution* in the face of (mounting) evidence that *p* will not be case, so that one can guard against loss of heart *before one has acted*. Resolving to do something is one thing, persisting with one's resolution and carrying it out, another. There are different factors that can make one stick with one's resolution. One of them is what the folk call 'hope' and this hope is not the upshot of a resolution.

Consider for illustration the following case: Hillary and Reinhold, climbers attempting a difficult route. Both desire to climb the mountain and have a low degree of confidence in their success. Both need to guard against loss of heart. So each resolves to act as if he will make it. According to (Hope3), both have the substantial hope that they will reach the summit.

When they begin the climb, the weather changes dramatically. Yet both persist

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<sup>17</sup> See Meirav ('Nature of Hope', p. 227) and Martin (*How We Hope*, p. 23). They argue that Pettit needs to specify a reason or rationale for the resolve in order to capture substantial hope. Our argument (see below) will count against (Hope3) even if improved along the lines they propose.

with their resolution and finally reach the summit because they had the mental resources to persist with their resolution. Reinhold is able to fight off the temptation to give up on his resolution. He grits his teeth and sticks with his resolve by sheer force of will.<sup>18</sup>

By contrast, Hillary persists with the climb because he remains optimistic about his chances of success. He does not need willpower to sustain his resolve, precisely because he has enough hope to keep going. The hope that enables Hillary to stick with the resolution is not another resolution to act as if he will reach the summit. For a further resolution will not make Hillary persist with his original resolution if he is motivated to reconsider. The same reasons that speak for reconsidering his initial resolution speak for reconsidering the resolution not to reconsider. The full explanation why Hillary reached the summit must mention that he resolved to act as if he would succeed *and* his hope that he would reach the summit.

Hope, then, cannot be cognitive resolve to act as if p even if we focus on cases where hope guards against loss of heart. So even if there are both ‘substantial hope’ and ‘superficial hope’, as Pettit describes, there is a further mental state that deserves the name ‘hope’. In fact, we think that the folk label really applies only this mental state ‘hope’ and we will follow the folk. Hope is one thing, cognitive resolve to guard against loss of heart another.

Hope can also work against resolve and willpower. Consider the case of an alcoholic who has resolved to remain abstinent on a certain day. On the day, a strong desire to drink comes upon him. He wants to stick to his resolution and so wants not to pick up the drink. He also believes that, all things considered, it would be best for him not to pick up the drink. Yes his desire to drink wins out and he drinks against his will precisely in the hope that no harm will come of it. Here the motivational force of hope counters resolve, rather than making or maintaining it.

## **6. Hope = Belief + Desire + Readiness to Offer a Justificatory Rationale**

Martin develops a tripartite analysis of hope that is designed to have the virtues, but not the vices of the tripartite analyses discussed so far. She gives a helpful summary:

According to the incorporation analysis, hope constitutes, in addition to an attraction to the hoped-for outcome and a probability assignment between 0 and 1 to that outcome, standing ready to offer a certain justificatory rationale for certain activities related to the outcome. These hopeful activities are: turning one’s attention and thoughts – especially by constructing fantasies – to the outcome; feeling a positive sense of anticipation – feeling “hopeful” – about it, and relying on it in one’s plans – though only with a back-up plan. The justificatory rationale includes appealing to the probability one assigns to the outcome, as “good enough” to license these activities, along with treating one’s attraction and the outcome’s attractive features as reasons to engage in them. (Martin, *How We Hope*, p. 69)

In a more condensed form:

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<sup>18</sup> See Richard Holton, *Willing, Wanting, Waiting*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), ch. 6 and Roy Baumeister, *Willpower: Why Self-Control is the Secret of Success* (London: Penguin, 2011), for evidence that there is a faculty of willpower that is independent of one’s beliefs, desires and intentions.

- (Hope4) *T* hopes that *p* iff
- (1) *T* neither rules out *p* nor not-*p* &
  - (2) *T* desires that *p* &
  - (3) *T* stands ready to justify cognitive activities and emotions pertaining to the outcome that *p* by taking the degree of probability *T* ascribes to the outcome to license these responses.

(Hope4) relies on a notion we have not encountered so far: *licensing*. Two people may assign the same probability to an outcome; yet differ in their response to this assignment. (ibid., p. 45.) For example, *A* takes a low probability of success to present us with challenge worth taking, while *B* takes it to be a reason for despair. Martin conceptualizes this observation by saying that for *A* the probability *licenses* action planning and anticipation, for *B* it doesn't.<sup>19</sup>

Martin takes (Hope4), among other things, to be attractive because it has room for hope without motivational force. However, as we have argued in section 3, there seem to be no cases of such hope. In turn, (Hope4) is implausible for several reasons.

*First*, even if the first problem can be finessed, there is more fundamental problem for (Hope4): one can act with the hope that *p* while lacking readiness to justify one's activities related to the hoped-for outcome. Consider again the racing driver discussed above. He drives in the hope of winning, but cannot afford to dedicate attention and thought to his victory. Such dedication of attention and thought would be entirely unjustified, and this is what he would say if forced to discuss the matter. The driver does dedicate attention and perhaps even thought to driving in the hope of victory. And his doing so may be justified. But the issue of justification is a matter for the consideration of philosophers and psychologists rather than car racers. The driver may simply have no interest in, and may and refuse to take a view on, the question of whether his focus is or was justified.

*Secondly*, (Hope4) suffers, to use Martin's term, from 'excessive reflectiveness'. Being animated by hope is one thing; justifying being so-animated is a different thing. A very young child, Mary, may hope that Father Christmas will bring many presents, but she is neither able nor ready to justify dedicating her attention to the outcome.

Martin responds by saying that little children are not capable of full-blown hope, but only of 'something very like hope, an attitude that is developmentally continuous with the hope captures by the incorporation analysis.' (Martin, *How We Hope*, p. 71.) But what independent reason would justify classifying the child's 'hope' as an attitude that is merely very similar to hope and not the real thing?

It seems to us that Mary's 'hope' is as good as any other example. If we can't see Mary's behavior in the light of her hope, we are missing something. What would be an independent reason to say that she does not really hope? Accepting (Hope4) gives one a reason to resist the intuitive classification. But (Hope4) is the proposal in need of justification, it cannot serve as the arbiter of what are cases of hope and what are only similar phenomena. Martin's response seems therefore either question-begging or stipulative: as a taxonomic proposal it is poor.

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<sup>19</sup> On one understanding, '*T* takes the degree of probability to license response *R*' implicitly relies on the notion of hope. If so, (Hope4) would be circular. However, we will not press the point here. For the purposes of this paper we take the notion of licensing to be independent of hope.

## 7. Hope = Hope (and not another thing)

So far we have not found a way to amend the belief/desire proposal to get a plausible view of hope. In general, definitions of concepts of mental states and activities in the form of necessary and sufficient conditions are hard to come by. In fact, we don't know of any good definition of this kind for a mental-state concept. Sections 2, 4, 5 and 6 make it plausible that there is also no analytic definition of hope. Why expect hope to be definable?

So we propose to change tack. We can take a clue from our discussion of the similarities between hope and willpower. While hope cannot be understood in terms of willpower, like willpower, it is an element of mind distinct from belief and desire whose strength determines whether one acts on one's beliefs and desires. This aspect of hope can be captured in one general characterization: suppose *G* is a possible desirable outcome of an attempted action *A*. Then, keeping fixed the subjective value of *G* and subjective likelihood of *G*, given *A*, the extent of a subject's motivation for doing *A* depends on the extent to which he hopes that if *A*, then *G*. This generalization takes hope to be distinct from belief and desire and to combine with these mental states in causing action. It suggests that we have a hope/desire/belief psychology, not a mere belief/desire psychology. Hope is a further primitive mental state that cooperates with others. Hence, one can shed light on hope by outlining its functional role in a web of mental states, just as one can shed light on any other primitive propositional attitude.

Consider Reinhold's case (section 2) in the light of this suggestion. Reinhold wants to reach the summit, but he believes that the chances of reaching it by climbing are slim. In this situation, he lacks sufficient reason to start the ascent. When his desire and belief are combined with hope, he has such a reason and will, *ceteris paribus*, be motivated to start the climb. He climbs in the hope that he will reach the summit. Thus one may be motivated to do *A* with the goal of attaining *G*, without expecting to attain *G* by doing *A*, if and only if one hopes that by doing *A*, one will attain *G*. Reinhold's attempt to climb in the light of his belief is explained by his intending to reach the top by climbing and the hope that he will succeed, not by the expectation of success.

We have provided reasons to think that our understanding of hope is grounded in our knowledge of how hope interacts with other primitive mental states, and not by defining hope in terms of other mental states. If we collect illuminating truths that connect hope with other mental states, we can acquire a non-reductive understanding of hope by specifying aspects of its functional role. We will not try to pursue that project in this paper. Our main aim was to show that this project is more fruitful than the attempt to define hope in terms of more fundamental mental concepts.

*Gabrielsegal@virginmedia.com*

*Philosophy  
King's College London  
160 Strand  
WC2R London  
Mark.Textor@KCL.AC.UK*